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**Bisland, Elizabeth.** *The Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn.* Two vols.

Pp. viii, 1035. Price, \$6.00. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1906.

Though Lafcadio Hearn is primarily a literary artist and poet, his rare insight into race psychology, especially into the mysterious realm of the sub-conscious and inherited elements, has made his works of great value to students of ethnic development. To such, his letters will be especially welcome, for in them, aside from their literary charm, they will frequently encounter in a more direct manner the personal views of the author upon the people among whom he lived at the various times of his life. For a time, Hearn interested himself in the negro race, and his little volume, "Two Years in the West Indies," is the most intimate study we have of the rich, though primitive, psychology of the peoples of Africa, influenced by a new geographical and ethnical environment. But Hearn had not found his life work, before his own inclination and the advice of friends had taken him to Japan. He is *par excellence* the interpreter of the ideals of the older Japanese civilization. Being himself essentially a poet, the simple though elusive poetry of original Japanese life deeply impressed him; being by nature inclined to dwell upon the mysterious and startling facts in human psychology, he revelled in the folklore and the current beliefs of a society which has made the spirit of the dead within us, the motives and impulses of the past, the leading element in its view of life.

To him it appeared that there was an amazing difference in the psychology of the Japanese and the Western races, a difference which made sympathy and friendship almost impossible. This attitude of Hearn's has evoked much criticism in the Japanese press, and it was there charged that it is simply Hearn's insufficient knowledge of Japanese as well as his very retiring nature which made the Japanese so mysterious to him. Yet it must certainly be admitted that the results of his main work do reveal very striking differences of racial psychology. It is strange that one who has discovered so much of poetry and interest in the Japanese mind should in a way be repelled by it. In a letter in 1895, he says: "You can't imagine my feeling of reaction in the matter of Japanese psychology. It seems as if everything had quite suddenly become clear to me, and utterly void of emotional interest; a race primitive as the Etruscan before Rome was, or more so, adopting the practices of a larger civilization under compulsion,—five thousand years at least emotionally behind us,—yet able to suggest to us the existence of feelings and ideals which do not exist, but are simulated by something infinitely simple." He says: "The sympathetic touch is always absent. I feel unhappy at being in the company of a cultivated Japanese for more than an hour at a time. After the first charm of formality is over, the man becomes ice—or else suddenly drifts away from you into his own world." Modern Japanese education, of which Hearn saw a great deal, filled his mind with doubts. The university, being a gate to public office, affording a start in life, has, in his view, little inner power. The high schools seem to him to be "ruining Japanese manners, and therefore morals." "Men cease to be lovable, and often become unbearable," which makes Hearn long for a great reaction. Intrigue, which, in the Orient, has been cultivated as an art for ages, as no doubt it has been in other countries, fills the life of the Japanese capital. "The result of the

adoption of constitutional government by a race accustomed to autocracy and caste, enabled intrigue to spread like a ferment, in new forms, through every condition of society." "Tokio takes out of me all power to hope for a great Japanese future." One of the main characteristics of the Japanese is "a tendency to silence and secrecy in regard to the highest emotions." In another letter he says: "That the Japanese can ever reach our aesthetic stage seems to me utterly impossible, but assuredly what they lack in certain directions, they may prove splendidly capable of making up in others. Indeed, the development of the mathematical faculty in the race—unchecked and unmodified by our class of aesthetics and idealisms—ought to prove a serious danger to western civilization at last. Japan ought to produce Napoleons of practical applications of science." Hearn considers the difference in sexual feeling the basis of the fundamental divergence between Japanese and western aesthetics.

Of current contemporaneous events we find comparatively little mention in these letters. The Chino-Japanese War Hearn looks upon as the last huge effort of the race for national independence. "Under the steady torturing pressure of our industrial civilization, Japan has determined to show her military power to the world by attacking her old teacher, China." In another letter he says: "But let no man believe Japan hates China. China is her teacher and her Palestine. I anticipate a reaction against Occidental influence after this war, of a very serious kind. Japan has always hated the West—western ideas, western religion. She has always loved China." Hearn regarded the check placed upon Japan by the three powers in 1895 as being rather in the interest of foreign residents, and as also likely to benefit Japan in the end. "She will be obliged to double or triple her naval strength and wait a generation. In the meantime she will gain much of other power, military and industrial. Then she will be able to tackle Russia." Hearn agrees with the view expressed in Pearson's "National Character." Orientals can so much *underlive* Europeans, the physical cost of existence is so much less to them, that probably "the future is not to the white races."

Hearn's mind in viewing his surroundings was ill at ease because he saw "the destruction of a wonderful and very beautiful civilization by industrial pressure." With Spencer, he fears the "coming slavery." He says: "The charm of Japanese life is largely the charm of childhood, and the most beautiful of all race childhoods is passing into an adolescence which threatens to prove repulsive. Perhaps the manhood may redeem all,—as with English 'bad boys' it often does." He especially disliked the official world with its narrow administrative criteria, its airs, conceits, and imitation of foreign ways. Yet he is often consoled by some new glimpse of the poetry of the older Japanese life. "I felt as never before how utterly dead old Japan is, and how ugly new Japan is becoming. I thought how useless to write about things which have ceased to exist. Only on reaching a little shrine, filled with popular *ex-voto*, it seemed to me something of the old heart was still beating,—but far away from me and out of reach." In another letter we read: "I felt as if I hated Japan unspeakably and the whole world seemed not worth living in, when there came two women to the house to sell ballads. One took her *samisen* and sang, and people crowded into the tiny yard to

hear it. Never did I listen to anything sweeter. All the sorrow and beauty, all the pain and the sweetness of life thrilled and quivered in that voice; and the old first love of Japan and of things Japanese came back, and a great tenderness seemed to fill the place like a haunting." Often still does he encounter the refinement of the old spirit so delicate and frail that a brutal civilization is crushing it out. For Hearn Japan had moved too fast. In her effort to make herself strong to protect her national life and independence, she had been forced to harden herself and to turn her back upon the sweetness and refinement of her old life. The tragedy which Hearn saw was that the spirit of life for which apparently all these sacrifices were made was itself crushed under the machinery created to defend it. The westernizing had been too successful, Hearn wanted an Oriental Japan.

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**Gorst, J. E.** *The Children of the Nation.* Pp. x, 297. Price, \$2.50. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1907.

The growing amount of attention given to the physical welfare of school children in America is partly due to the inductive processes of American observers, such as the heads of city schools, health departments, and relief agencies, but chiefly to the flood of literature on this subject that has come to us from Germany, France, and Great Britain.

The book under review is serviceable because of its analysis of the conditions involved in child health rather than for the remedies proposed for physical defects, such as free meals, free eye-glasses, free everything hitherto associated with parental responsibility.

Each chapter is full of practical suggestions for teacher, parent and citizen in American school districts, rural as well as urban. For example, the discussion of school hygiene begins with a proposition that should be self-evident,—“If you take the children out of the pure air of the country, or even the less healthy air of the streets and parks of towns, you must take care not to put them into air unfit to breathe in your school.” It seems that in England, as in America, that the main fault is not so much in the defective construction of buildings as that “teachers, managers and inspectors refuse to make proper use of the ventilation provided.”

In speaking of provision for water, lighting, desks and playgrounds the author shows how common it is for schools actually to manufacture physical defects.

It is worth while for those impressed with the author's argument for free lunches, free eye-glasses and general state interference, to reflect that the fact basis of his reasoning is very slight,—as he himself admits. The European cities have discovered an alarming amount of what is called physical deterioration, but which might be proved to be a relative improvement,—though an absolute defect. Seeing clearly a need, they have hastened to remedy the symptoms. It is due to the Scotch sanitarians such as Dr. Chalmers, of Glasgow, and the medical officers of Edinburgh and Dundee.